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Daily Life of the Fishing Village

Fishing families may have informal gatherings toward the end of the day. On a late summer afternoon, the family may sit in the open doorway of the house, for hedges, fences, the barriers, and trees are rare. The wife may be nursing her naked child. Her husband, a fisherman, has changed into his indigo blue and white striped kimono, a tall, broad, deeply tanned man. Next to him sits his mother, over 70 years old, her hands tattooed, as are those of all the old women. She is wearing a kimono of the same color, but of a dot pattern. They sit on unrolled mats. On the veranda, three or four men, unwashed and still in their work clothes, discuss the events of the day. A lacquer tray with tea cups is on the floor near them and the tea (as it so often is) may be cold. There is brown sugar to eat along with the tea. The grandmother may be economically smoking a half or a third of a cigarette in the typical Japanese pipe. As it grows later, the wife gets up, pours some water in the stone mortar, and smashes the sweet potatoes with the long wooden pole. The men continue talking for a while, then take their leave. The wife, her work at the mortar finished, goes into the dirt kitchen to start the evening meal.

The wife of the fisherman has worries that do not bother the farmer's wife. There is always the danger that her husband, or son, will not return, a real possibility, of which the frequency of widowhood in Minatogawa is proof. Every season, there is at least one instance of a fisherman who has either been lost, or whose delay in returning has provoked intense worry. If crews are still out when an unexpected storm arises, there is considerable tension in the village. Since the war, rescues at sea are more likely than before. The village headman quickly reports overdue boats. The American forces have created much good will in seeking fishermen lost at sea.

Women, on the other hand, have opportunities for leisure when the catch is light, or weather is unfavorable. At these times, they can busy themselves with other tasks, in the field, gathering stones, getting miscanthus, but they do not have the unremitting activity of the woman in the agricultural village. There is more visiting during the day than one observes in an agricultural village.

The fisherman, with or without land, tries to keep pigs and perhaps a few goats. In Minatogawa, the pens are often made of sandstone quarried here. Not only the floors and the sides, but the stalls are made of this material. One reason for this is the openness of the village and the danger that pigs will be killed in a storm. A typhoon may carry away the house, its owners having gone to the stronger house of a friend or relative, but pigs are an investment and an asset to be guarded.

871 ($30,970) for the four schools in the township. The largest expenses
658 are salaries, construction, and maintenance. Money is also provided for
[651] conferences, supplies, and other items on the school budget. The PTA budget serves to supplement the regular school appropriations, which are always insufficient to cover all expenses.

The concern with educational matters is carried into the community in another way. Taira has established a so-called scholarship incentive fund for which money is contributed by the village store and some prominent Taira businessmen from the city, such as the former mayor. This fund is used to give awards, usually notebooks or pencils, to all students, double amounts to those with outstanding attendance records. Honor students are not singled out. The largest part of the fund is used as financial help to families with one or more high school students and to widows with schoolchildren who have no other breadwinner in their family. This is another example of direct support of education by the community.

871 As with all matters concerning village life, participation of parents in school affairs and an interest in the school's goals and problems depend greatly on the educational and economic background of individual families. For this reason, scholastic standing of children is frequently a reflection of the interest and encouragement they receive at home. Incentive is therefore to some extent passed on from successful parents to their children, and if one can speak of a succession in leadership, it is partly determined by this instruction.

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Chapter 11

Recreation

●517 No one can remain in the village of Taira for long without recognizing that its people have a happy faculty for enjoying themselves during those periods which they can spare from their work. The daily routine is broken by a good number of rests and holidays, and the full and unburdened indulgence in social activities at such times, without any ap-

2:Maretzki & Maretzki E-5 (1954-1955) 1963 AC7 Okinawa AC7
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parent aftereffects of remorse or physical incapacitation, is a characteristic of this village. Excessive or orgiastic feasting which might interfere with work duties of the following day or days is absent. Leisure events spent in groups are joyful and desirable to all, untinged by hidden motives of social compulsion or conformity, which marks so many recreational activities in a culture like ours.

The village calendar does not include a weekly rest day, although government offices are closed on Sunday. Rest and holidays for the majority of villagers are regulated by religious and agricultural events which, in former times, were observed at least once during each lunar month. Although some of these have been simplified or given up in recent times by people whose participation in the old religion has diminished or by those who seek a sounder economy by urging greater production of crops and accumulation of savings, when it comes to observing and enjoying holidays, even the most rational village leader forgets his concern for the time being. The elaborateness of celebrations may be less today, as a result of economic pressure, than in former times—the spirit hardly could be. To know and appreciate the sense of humor and the wit of the people, one has only to attend their parties. During other times these qualities are less expressed—though they are never completely absent. If the naive comment that Okinawans are "childlike"—an observation which Westerners in describing them have permitted themselves—can be taken to have any foundation in fact, it could only be that like many children they are capable of complete absorption and indulgence in fun when the occasion is proper. For the Taira person such indulgence cannot be achieved without food, drink, music, and dance. These are the main components of entertainment which help to elicit gaiety and good humor, whether during holidays observed by families in individual homes, or those of the descent group main houses, or in village-wide celebrations, which are extremely common. These ingredients also appear during more informal hours of relaxation, each day after work, when there are small gatherings here and there, though on a more modest scale.

Since calendrical holidays, whether of a family nature or community-wide, have many aspects in common, we may mention some of these in general. Most gatherings begin in the late afternoon and last until late at night although never until daybreak. These are the rare times when people can dress in their best clothes and by doing so shed, perhaps, symbolically all associations with everyday routine.

The sequence of events at any kind of celebration is somewhat like a veil dance during which one layer of formality after another disappears. A formal period precedes not only all village-wide celebrations